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ABSTRACT

Ways in which humor is used as an administrative technique are explored in this paper, with a focus on its impact on school culture. Case study methodology is based on interviews with two principals and five staff members at a Tennessee high school. Following a review of transcript excerpts, the principal's use of humor is viewed through four frames--structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. Findings indicate that the use of humor facilitated an informal school climate, increased social bonding (which contributed to increased productivity), conflict resolution, and increased commitment. Humor is identified as an important device for improving administrator/teacher relationships. (31 references) (LMI)

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HUMOR AS A MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE: ITS IMPACT ON SCHOOL CULTURE AND CLIMATE

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Humor as a Management Technique: Its Impact

on School Culture and Climate

Introduction

Humor has been studied by scholars from a multitude of perspectives: psychology, biology, anthropology, sociology, and more recently management (Duncan, 1982; Kendall, 1984; Vinton, 1989). However, a limited amount of research has been conducted in the field of education. Willower's (1983) research focused on the "war stories" found in educational administration subcultures and suggested that this type of humor seemed to evoke shared ordeals, common meanings and social support for the school's culture when expressed in meetings with members of the subculture. Wood (1983) concluded in studying coping mechanisms in a British high school that humor and laughter played a major role as coping strategies for teachers and students alike. Burford (1983) found that a principal's sense of humor played a role in teacher loyalty and that this impacts perceptions of job satisfaction and school effectiveness, especially at the secondary level. Our interest in the use of humor in administration lead us to conduct an ethnographic study on a principal to see how humor is used as an administrative technique.

Organizational culture

Organizational culture is one of the newest and, perhaps, one the most controversial elements of organizational theory being addressed today. Instead of viewing an organization as a goal oriented structure, the organization is viewed as a mini-society with social constructions.

These social constructions may vary in different areas on an organization, but organizational theorists argue that consistent threads are woven across the organization which clearly identify the existence of an "umbrella" organizational culture (Ott, 1989). This culture is not created consciously or explicitly. It evolves as people work together and successfully overcome the problems of job survival. New members learn acceptable behavior patterns about "the way we do things around here" through forms of nonverbal communication and through repeated telling of myths, sagas, and stories complete with heros, crises, and happy endings (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). Old members often do not even realize that they are in the process of passing a culture along to the next generation of members.

What people joke about at work, the teasing or bantering that goes on among employees within a particular organization contributes to the organization's culture. Despite the fact that is has no real purpose and no rules, play in its various forms (jokes, teasing, brainstorming, and strategizing) bonds people together, reduces conflict, and creates new visions and cultural values (Deal and Kennedy). In 1982 Duncan called for further research with a view toward the role of humor in affecting a group's performance.

Duncan suggests that humor provided insights into a culture's values system. Along with Boland and Huffman (1983), Duncan believes that humor facilitates communications in a group and affects the group's cohesiveness. The communication paradigm of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) extends this theory by suggesting "who says what, how, and to whom" affects how information is used in an organization. This sociopsychological aspect of communication, in turn, affects the effectiveness of organizations in attaining its goals. Clearly, as Hall writes in Beyond Culture (1959), "if man is not to destroy himself, he must begin to transcend his own culture; first the covert, obvious culture and second and more importantly, the unconscious culture--*which is much more difficult to transcend*." [italics added]

The Problem

Many questions concerning the function and nature of humor in school administration relations remain unanswered. One area for investigation, and the area that this paper addresses, is the use of humor by building principals and its effect on members of the school's staff. The preceding statement generated the following major research question: What impact does a principal's humor have on the culture and climate of the school? Other questions deemed important to this study include: how significant do school principals view a sense of humor in their work and how significant do staff members think humor is to a building principal? Of what importance is a principal's sense of humor toward creating cohesiveness among staff members and improving school morale? Are their different implications of humor for male and female teachers? What effect does the structure of a school have on how a principal uses humor?

These questions originated from observations that were make of a principal at Weber High School, a suburban school in a large urban school district in the south. (In accordance with scientific procedure, the name of the school and its faculty are fictitious.) The principal, Dr. Charles Chase, has been a public school teacher for eleven years and an administrator at either the junior or senior high level for twenty four years, the last nine at Weber. It has been observed that Dr. C. (a term used by many on the faculty when addressing Dr. Chase) used an inordinate amount of levity in comparison to other school principals with whom we have kno, and we wondered how this affected the culture and the climate at Weber High.

Consistent in humor research has been the problem of an adequate definition of humor. In reviewing the research of Chapman and Foot, Charles Burford, and in reference to the Penguin English Dictionary, the definition of humor for the purpose of this study was that which causes

good-tempered laughter or cheerful and good-tempered amusement among those in the school organization.

Review of Literature

In the course of evolution, play has been a relatively recent and not too well understood addition to academia. Hall (1959) identifies play as one of ten separate kinds of human activity which acts as a Primary Message System [PMS] and Donahue (1985) refers to laughter, the most common verbal notice of play, as the most enjoyable form of human communication. "Far more complicated and challenging than everyday spech, humor involves intergrating the higher cortex--the frontal lobes than can project what will happen--with the limbic system that generates the affective state of enjoyment." Curiously, though no one knows why we laugh, almost everyone has a theory. Aristotle, Hobbes, Kant, Bergson, Freud and Bateson are just a few of the individuals who have grappled with humor and who have contributed to the four basic theories of humor (Beyer, 1987).

From the perspective of the superiority theorists such as Aristotle and Hobbes, humor is always social or cultural, and always involves comparisons to others. We laugh at ourselves when we have been superior to what we once were and we laugh at others who, for one reason or another, are our inferiors. Many societies "make fun" of the latest ethnic group to arrive, i.e., Polish or Italians in the United States (Williams). Hall (1959) observes, "If you can learn the humor of a people and really control it you know that you are also in control of nearly everything else."

Kant and Bergson believed that humor evolves from some kind of incongruity between what one expects and what one gets, with this lack of consistency and harmony in life denoting, yet, another theory about humor. Many jokes are based on incongruities of one sort on another,

which is one reason why the reader (or listener) has to be almost a native speaker in order to appreciate the full implications of a joke. If one is unable to assess the degree of incongruity, one can't appreciate the humor (Hall, 1959).

Psychoanalytic theorists like Freud argue that humor facilitates masked aggression. Sexual humor, for example, allows one the opportunity to hide sexual aggressiveness and hostility since society will not tolerate undisguised sexuality. Thus laughter may also be viewed as a coping mechanism, a way of releasing repressed feelings.

Finally, there are the cognitive theorists who focus on the way the brain processes information and upon the paradoxical nature of humor. Gregory Bateson (1972) is probably the best known exponent of this position, which proposes that the mind is unable, at its present stage of development, to process certain kinds of information (namely, oppositional or paradoxical concepts) and to come to grips with the complexities of play (Berger, 1972). Play and PMS of defense are also closely related; Hall (1959) notes humor is often used to protect or hide vulnerabilities .

Of recent signifcance is The HUMOR Project, founded by Joel Goodman in Saratoga Springs, New York in 1978 which sheds new light on the functions and effects of humor on society (Dickerson). In thirteen years demand for seminars and workshops on the uses of humor has been growing from civic organizations and companies such as IBM and Monsanto Company, among others (Dickerson). "The 1980's were a decade where people were increasingly interested in lifestyles and wellness. Humor can influence lifestyle, the ability to deal with stress. Humor can help us keep our balance...also humor is showing up as a balm for the sick (Journal of the American Medical Association)." "I'd be real surprised if it weren't [sic] in the occupational handbook in ten years. It's the birth of a new field," Goodman states.

Many thinkers agree on the dominating need of human beings to find meaning which

transcends the mundane. Peters and Waterman (76)have concluded that "excellent companies seem to understand that every man seeks meaning." Communication behavior is the primary vehicle for the active creation and maintenance of cultures (Gudykunst, 1989). Interpretative orientations to organizations and organizational culture have lead to a symbolic understanding of what we say and do. Indeed, much of what we communicate to others is through humor. In one qualitative study, Karen Vinton (1989) concluded that various types of humor observed in the workplace were found to minimize differences between employee status and alleviate tension. The humor helped create an environment that facilited the accomplishment of work assignments. She noted that humor also had implications for socialization of employees to the workplace and appeared to create bonds among employees.

Leaders, too, are cognizant of the importance of humor in communicating in the workplace. Self-effacing humor, Kushner (77) states, ia a leadership trait. "It reflects strength and confidence. It shows that you're secure enough to laugh at yourself. It also creates rapport, boosts morale, and makes you more likeable within the organization." Organizational leaders may also use humor as an effective way of energizing or revitalizing an organization (Conger, 119) or to help others within the organization think about tense situations (Bolman and Deal, 164). An element of play appears to be especially liberating in situations of great stress-an atmosphere commonly associated with the charismatic leader (Conger, 118).

As stated earlier, this paper examines the use of humor in educational organizations with the principal as the primary initiator. Other than the research by Burford (1983), no findings were available which addressed the questions this paper proposes.

Methodology

The data for this study were obtained from two principals and five staff members at Weber

High School. Each respondent with the exception of Dr. C was randomly selected and constituted a case study for analysis in this investigation. Each person was informed that the research project was designed to study humor as a management tool. All respondents were informed that data collected was to be confidential. The interviews took place at a place suggested by each respondent, either in an office, a classroom, or the school's library. Most of the interviews took place during school hours although two interviews took place after school. One formal member check was conducted for each of the respondents at school.

Fieldnotes were made of each observation and interview while at the site. When the interview was completed, informal checks were made with each of the respondents to verify the data collected. Fieldnotes were later typed and each line numbered for purposes of creating an audit trail. A reflexive journal was also kept and entries were made in this notebook after each interview session and at other times when thoughts came to mind. Though not typed, pages were numbered for reference in the audit trail.

While taking field notes during an interview, the practice was followed of drawing a line vertically down one third of the page. To the left of this line record unusual gestures of the respondent, changes in the intonation of the respondent's voice when answering a question, and other behavior patterns observed about the respondent during the interview process were recorded. Data in the remaining two thirds of the page represented statements made during the interview by the respondent and the researcher. In the body of the case study, each complete idea was marked off in brackets and numbered in the right margin. Each number corresponded to an entry on the reference list provided. Each number on the reference list showed where each piece of information could be verified.

Trustworthiness Components

For the purpose of establishing credibility, the following procedures were taken:

1) Maintaining field journals including field notes which were later transcribed and typed; audiotapes when interviewing two of the respondents; a reflexive journal which is a kind of diary for recording entries related to the field work, later referenced by date.

2) Member checks made informally after each interview and formally after completing the case study.

3) Triangulation through verification of ideas from different respondents (contextual validation); second interviews when necessary.

4) Peer debriefing by other observers.

5) Developing and maintaining an audit trail. Each entry in the typed transcripts of the field notes was coded. Pages were numbered in the reflexive journal for reference and each idea in the body of the case study was numbered so as to reference materials and substantiate statements made.

Case Study

Clay Baxter
Coordinator of Program and Staff Development, Weber High School

"There are a variety of styles among administrators," Baxter said, and "without question, Dr. C. uses humor more than any other principal with which I am familiar." Clay Baxter is one of nine administrators at Weber. His office is off of the central office, closest to the Dr. Charles Chase, Executive Principal of Weber High School. His responsibilities include advising the executive principal on matters pertaining to the academic program. "What effect do you think a principal's humor has on the climate of a school, I asked. "It gives it a sense of homeyness," he

replied. "It takes some of the starch out of the normal school structure and releases some of the tension that otherwise might be there because some principals have the tendency to formalize to the point of being boring or fearsome. I think Dr. C uses humor to provide a lessening of a negative atmosphere." Given what you said, I inquired, "what don't you think more people use it?" Some people can't use it adequately he stated. There are individuals who don't have that ability to use humor. For them to use humor would be out of character for them. Some principals have a perception of their role and their role is to be a father figure, a principal -teacher and then there are alot of teachers who don't use humor.

Do you think a principal using humor can make a cohesive body among staff members? I think it would have the tendency to if it is used in the right way, in the humorous generic and not pointed at some one or making fun of some one, although that is not bad in some instances. "Singling out a person or a particular group of people who have a relationship either through religion or a political body or some thing of that nature where it might get to the point that it was really funny but it is also pointed to someone's group, association, or in some way would be demeaning to them." Would sexist humor also fall into that realm, I wondered? It would, again, depend on how you use it. If you use it to the detriment of some of the females and males in the group depending on their particular religious persuasion or moral persuasion or how they fell about certain things, it might be. There is a fine line. Do you think some of the faculty members how do you think they perceive Dr. C's humor? I know the ones that I am more associated with love it. But that is not to say that there are some people who, well, no one has ever said anything to me about the humor and its effect on them other than very positive; however, I wouldn't doubt that there would be somebody who would be oversensitized to it."

Do you think there are different implications of humor for male and female teachers," I wondered? Sure. Again, I think it gets back to how you feel about humor, and how a female

would feel about males and how a male would feel about females, depending on the experiences they have had. What might be humorous to some, to most of us, might be offensive to them because of how they perceive the female movement. "I think you always run that risk when you tell that kind of joke." Most people use that, i.e., Dr. C uses that, to break into what other kinds of things he is going to say. He uses that to get the group into a good mood, to relieve any kind of tension that might be there, "to get everybody comfortable". What effect does the structure of the school have on how a principal uses humor? In a smaller setting, of course, you have fewer administrators and I think there is probably even greater tendency to be less outgoing when you and perhaps one other person or two other people have responsibility for the whole school because most of it is very formalized, where in this setting it can be formalized but the more formalization you have of it, the more tenseness you might have simply because it is so large, and the uncertainity. Not only the uncertainity, but you have things that, quote go wrong unquote, here that probably doesn't happen in other places and you have other critical kinds of situations. When you have a pep rally, you have 2000 people in the pep rally, where in another setting you might have 500 and you have to have a little humor to deal with those kinds of situations. That's not to say you are not going to need the humor in any of the of situations, but I think it is even more important in a larger situations.

Suppose, I said, people were perceiving that the kinds of jokes that were being told were, let's say, of the sexist nature. What effect do you think this might have? I could probably see a new person feeling, if for some reason they were offended, that it would give them pause to think what kind of situation I am going to be in. But if you separate that from the actual teaching environment which they are going to be in and that would take time to understand what type of teaching environment they are going to be in, I think they would find that if the joke telling had been less than adequate in their eyes, for whatever reason, personal reason, they would have, I

think they would find their teaching situation not to be directly impacted by that.

Am I correct in saying that we have fewer transfers, that we have more people wanting to come to McGavock and fewer transfers out than any other school in the school system? We haven't had a request for a transfer in the last four years. Do you think that has something to do with his management style? Oh, I think it has a great deal. "This is the place that folks want to come rather than folks wanting to leave." What role does humor play in that or does it? Well, I am not sure humor has a primary role. I think that it is his managerial style. He is a very approachable, sensitive administrator and he tells what he expects and he lets you do the job. And he doesn't bother you with a lot of faculty meetings, a lot of busy work. As long as you you do your job, then he lets you do your job and provides a setting in which to do your job in a very easy going, and I think his humor would be on that side, of providing a pleasant environment. That justs goes along with it. "He uses the humor in a faculty meeting, when in many cases, I have been in a faculty meeting where they were stiff and formal, to start off the faculty meeting with some clever kinds of jokes in order to, well, to get you involve and personalize it for you." Do you think it is advantageous for teachers to use humor? Absolutely, he replied. "There again, you get less tension as it exists. You make the setting more comfortable."

Dr. Charles Chase
Executive Principal at Weber High

Dr. Charles Chase has been an administrator for 24 years. He uses humor, especially jokes, while conducting faculty meetings. Presently, Dr. C. is Executive Principal of Weber High School. It may be part of your personality, I inquired, but what impact do you think a principal's humor has on the climate of a school? I think it can have quite a bit of impact. I think you can take things seriously and deal with things in a professional and serious manner

and yet you have to keep a sense of humor about you realizing that there are human fralities. "Human beings are perhaps the most amusing things on the earth. And I think you have to be able to see the humor in human behavior and perhaps express it sometimes. And I tend to think it kind of relaxes everybody and takes the tension out of a situation. There is enough tension that comes people's way just out of the natural course of events without going out and creating more and anytime you can go out and relieve that tension and get everybody on a more relax or less uptight situation, I think you have a better chance of resolving the problem, in what I would say, a rational manner."

You normally make it apart of your presentation, is that correct? Yes, he replied smiling. Do you think it helps in creating more cohesiveness among the staff members and improving school morale? Oh, I think so. You know it is tough enough to drag yourself out of bed every morning and come to work. It is not the easiest thing to do and sometimes you have to force yourself to do it. But if you can make it, I think humor tends to make it a little more pleasant workplace. In the number of human interactions that go on in a school like this or any other school, those number of interactions is enormous, "there is so much potential for conflict between people, between teacher-teacher, teacher-student, student-student, administrator -teacher, and I think if you can sometimes see the light side of things, and maybe stand back from the situation, and say now, is this as serious as I perceive it to be? I think it kind of helps a person to deal with things more rational."

I have observed you use it with students as well. Oh, yes. You frequently put it in a part of the announcements. Is that plan or spontaneous or what effect do you think that has? What intent do you think it has? "Again, I think it conveys to the student that we are, perhaps, a humane institution, that we are not strictly here to tell you don't do this, don't do that, don't do everything but that humor is a part of our everyday life, whether it be from a school

administrator, or whether it be from a teacher or from another student. I think it, again, sets the climate in the building or at least assists in a more relax climate, a climate whe they feel more comfortable with one another. Do you think people are likely you come to you with a problem because you have tried to break down some of the formality perhaps? I think so. I think so.

Are there any types of humor that you would not consider using? Well, he said very sternly, "any kind of humor that degrades an individual, I would never and if I have ever used that kind of humor it has certainly hasn't been intentional. But I do try to stay away from humor that would degrade an individual or a group of individuals. Or any type of humor that would cross the line of obsencity." Do you think there are different implications of humor for males and females? "Yes, but here again, I try not to afford being offensive to anyone. I know jokes about human sexuality sometimes are, perhaps, offensive to some people but I think it would help sometime. Man, as I say, is funny. All aspects I think, of human behavior have their humorous side. But as I said any kind of joke or any type of story dealing with human sexuality I try to make it so it won't be offensive to anyone." I think alot of times using humor at the beginning of a meeting sometimes tends to try to relax everybody. "And people, in general I say, they find sexual amusing to some degree, as long as it is not offensive."

What effect does the structure of McGavock have on how you use humor? For example, is it the size of it that would make humor more appropriate than it would in a smaller faculty? No, I don't think so. I have done this from the smallest school I have been. And I have tried to use basically the same administrative approach with the use of humor of dealing with people in basically the same manner. If there is somebody who wanted to go into administration, what would you tell them first about using humor and what you have learn over the years? "Well, some people can't use it. If it is not part of your personality, don't use it. Forced humor is not

especially effective. I think it has to be part of a person's personality. You have to feel confident with it. Again, as I say, try to aviod anything that directs itself at any particular group or any particular individual." Have you ever used humor in dealing with parents? Oh, yes. I think it tends to diffuse the situation. But you have to be careful though to know when and at what point to interject humor. And in a situation dealing with parents, you have to know the right moment perhaps to bring the humor into the situation because some of them come in pretty angry to begin with. Usually if they call you, they are angry. And you don't want to come off too early as being flipant and not taking their concern seriously or too lightly. Sometimes you can't use humor. At other times it can help diffuse the situation and make the parent look better. (I found Dr. C. to be very cooperative and sincere. He wanted to know if I had heard of teachers who thought he was being offensive.)

Linda Ward
English Instructor

Linda Ward has taught 25 years, five of which were in suburban Chicago. "The first year I was in Metro I was assign to Washington Junior High the year before busing. I taught 7th, 8th and 9th grade students. I had all three. "That was my introduction to Nashville," she exclaimed.

Would you say of all the executive principals you have had that Dr. C. uses humor probably more than anyone else? "Defintely, in fact, two of the others didn't even have a sense of humor I could locate." What impact do you think a principal's humor has on the climate of a school? Oh, I think it helps the atmosphere as far as teachers are concern. "It gives a feeling of comeradie that may or maybe not be there" and I think you know everybody likes to laugh. Do you think there was no commeradie in these other schools where the principals were void of humor? The relationship was not at all close between teachers and principals in the other schools.

I think we tolerate things that, maybe, we wouldn't tolerate otherwise, at least so well. There are alot of things here in school that aren't perfect - disorganization, general disorganization. "Things are said that they will be to done one way and everyone knows that up to the time when we are in the middle of doing it, it can be changed. I think that we put up with it without trying to do anything about it better because we have a good feeling about the principal through his use of humor. That is illrespected of other things that we may not feel so good about.

Do you think Dr. C's use of humor improves school morale? Yes, she said empathically. Do you think their are different implivations of humor for male and female teachers? Oh definitely, because "Dr. C.'s humor is almost all chauvanistic and most of his jokes involves something that has to do with sex and women in a non-complimentary way." Do you perceive other faculty members feeling the same way? Oh, goodness yes. Many women when he cracks a joke, if you look around the room, you will see most women not even smiling. And yet this seems to counteract what I said before. It is hard to explain. It is paradoxical. In other words I personally like humor, but I don't like his jokes and I do feel that they reflect a real attitude that is not equal to the sexes. What implications is there for males? Well, "there is a good ol' boy feeling that is very definte here in the school." Do you think that is a reflect of his value system? Yes, defintely. Do you those values are transmitted or carried out in other areas of the school? Yes.

Some men are aware of this and they don't like it either, but I have never looked at a man. You know, how "there is sort of a communication across women just as there is with men so I am more aware of how the women feel." But I don't want to be unfair to them. What is their facial expression? What gives you this implication? Sometimes there is the pretense of accepting it and you look at the person and you recognize that it is not genuine. I guess it is body language that I am thinking of, probably. Do you notice it in black women as well as white women? Yes,

yes. Anybody who is sensitive on prejudice and that definitely includes black women. Other than sexist jokes are there other kinds of jokes that he consistently tells that you can categorize? No. I hope that isn't unfair, but at least that's what stood out. I am sure there would have to be others that are not.

What effect does the structure of the school have on how a principal uses humor? In a faculty meeting we're a capative audience so obviously, it can set, it is just an obvious way to open a speech or to open a meeting is to tell jokes. But yet you have had many administrators, if not most administrators who have chosen not to do this. Well, he knows more about speech than they do. Even if I don't like the jokes I much prefer the method. I like humor myself, you know. I think he is totally unconscious of it. You don't think he is picking up the body language in the audience that some people are turned off? I said. No, I don't. I don't know of any reason why he would do it the way he does.

I respect him professionally in ways connected with ideas. I personally don't feel comfortable with him, however, because I am aware of this other attitude. But I do respect him.. I respect his education. I don't necessarily agree with him in alot of the things he does in running a school but I certainly would never go in and criticize them with him. Is it the humor, is that the reson why? It's the attitude that the humor shows. I prefer to deal with people on an equal basis rather than a superior-submissive basis.

Some people have said that they feel that his humor tried to equalized because people can then share a joke. "There is the other perception, " she said and "there is a element of that comes through even to me though I don't like the jokes." But when you see a joke as chauanistic it puts a social ranking system emerging. You are either above me or below me, or you are aware of that to the other person that you are either above or below.

What do you think his intentions are? I think that this is the thing that he enjoys,personally,

so therefore he uses it with other people. You don't think there is any planned use of his humor? I can't think of any. Oh, well sure. I think he does it to set everybody at ease. Which in fact you think you don't think really occurs? It does to some degree. I like his telling jokes and I can see it does set the faculty at ease, but I don't like the chauvinistc jokes. I am just trying to differentiate..

Do you think humor is something you can use with students? That is just what I was going to say. I use use it with my students. Sometimes, I am slightly critical in a humorous way, she said laughingly. Do the students pick it up, I asked? They pick up the humor and I hope that the people it is being directed at, pick up the other. I am never sure, you know. A little bit of irony, here and there. I don't think there is anything wrong with using humor. I think it is a good idea.

Dr. Mary Black
English Instructor

Dr. Black has taught high school English for eighteen years in Scarsville, the last five at Weber High School. Recently she completed her doctorate in English at a local state university. What impact do you think a principal's use of humor has on the culture and the climate of a school? Does it have any, I asked? I don't think it has any here. I think if you are talking about the culture and the climate you would have to include the students, and I don't think the students see it. The faculty sees it on isolated occassions. What impact does it have on the faculty? I think in short term it is probably pleasant. I don't think long term it has any impact because I think there are other things, situations which exist which override the humor, at least for me. Do you think his humor has anything to do with morale? Not in long term. "It is nice to chuckle for the few minutes that we are down there in a faculty meeting, but I don't think it necessarily carries over into the running of the school".

How do you think his humor affects other faculty? "I think sometimes it is a little embarrassing. It doesn't partically embarass me, but I have observed faces that are sometimes a little bit shocked. I don't think it is all that bad. What types of individuals do you feel find Dr. C.'s jokes embarassing. Mainly females. Why do you think it is embarassing to females? "Because sometimes they are sexist in nature or they are just really blue," she said laughingly. Dr. Earthman at Oakdale , she remembered, used humor, but it was not quite as earthy. "He didn't tell slightly off-color jokes." I guess women just don't like "locker room humor" in a faculty meeting of mixed gender, especially the more swormish females.

Why do you think he does it? Do you think he is aware of how some of the faculty feels? "Why do I think he does it? Why do I think he chooses that type of joke? Hhhhhh, that is a good question. I haven't thought about that. Maybe that is the only kind he hears. I don't think it is necessarily a reflection of his personality. He likes that type of humor. Maybe that is a reflection of his value system. I am not saying that it is not, but I don't have enough data to support the type of claim that it is indicative of his value system."

Do you think Dr. C's humor can also act as a cohesive factor for other faculty members? I think it can, but I think it is mainly male." Are you saying that his use of humor is one-sided, that it is locker room humor, I asked? "Yes, pretty much. I wouldn't say most of it is, but I would say a signficant proportion of it is." Have you seen anything which tells you that he does perceive men and women as being different in making decisions? I think that is his perception. He has never said anything particularly about this, but I think there are some attitudes that suggest that. Well actually not just attitudes. I think actually he is probably pretty typical of other principals in that, for instance, the lattitude that is given to coaches that the regular classroom teaches don't have.

Would you be any more or less likely to go to him becuase of what you perceive as an sexist

attitude? That, in and of itself, no. There are reasons why I would be more relunctant to go, but they involve other things that go on. I mean I can't just divorce the two. I mean it would be hard for me to decide well whether I would not go to him because he tells sexist jokes or because I have lost respect for him because of this other reason.Do you think that his telling of sexist jokes is really the same thing? Some people have said that his telling of sexist jokes has to do with his own sexual..."Well," she interrupted, "I thought about that a while ago. There again, there is something we can't substaniate. I don't know that I feel comfortable making that assertion. I don't have enough data."

What effect do you think the size of a school has on the way a principal uses humor? I don't think it allows him to use humor more. I think, from his standpoint, he sees it, perhaps, as a cohesive device. Because we are so large and so spreadout when we do get together once every two or three weeks or whatever it is for a faculty meeting, he wants to inject this laughter so we will enjoy the time that we are there together and for some I am sure it does. Do you think it is a way to relieve eliminate stress in teaching? Do you perceive that?" It doesn't relieve mine."

Do you think other people on the faculty share your sentiments? Other women for example? I think probably so. I can't give you a percentage. What about blacks? Hmmmm. How do you they react to his humor? I really know that many blacks on the faculty to say. I have never heard any of them say. The ones I always see are laughing, but that is true of everyone else too. You laugh when the executive principal tells a joke, right, even if it is not funny. What of the people who don't laugh. Are they a bit older or younger, the women you have observed? I would say a cross section. a fairly small sampling of people around me. But I wouldn't limited it to any one age group. Only the older ones are offended, I couldn't say that. Do you think it is the more liberated women that you know about who become offended by his humor? Hmm, it is possible.

What message do you think he gives to young people coming into the teaching profession? What do you think he is saying or is there any message? "I think the message he wants to communicate is see how close we in education are. If we laugh together, then everything is A-OK. I know that is the message he wants to give. I assume that is the message he wants to give. I don't know what the message received actually is. I suspect that some really do think, oh gee, this is really nice. You go to a faculty meeting and the executive principals tells jokes all the time. I am sure that is the reaction of the vast majority. Whether any of them are offended by what I have said, perceived as sexism in jokes, I can't say. I just can't say.

I think humor is a wonderful addition to an administrative style ,but I don't think it can be the whole substance of his style. I don't think it can compensate for other weaknesses in style. From my perspective he is trying to substitute for substance. I think there are some administrative skills he lacks or is not using. Do you think there are times when humor can be the appropriate thing for an administrator to use? Yes. Can you give me an illustration? I think if there is mutual respect, if everyone is doing his or her job, that they click. If you can't get two people together, you are going to come up with this and I think humor can be very useful in relieving tension. People do like to laugh. I like to laugh as childless as I am but I want to laugh at the appropriate time, for the appropriate things and I don't want laughter to be a cover up, to be used as a means of dropping over or covering much more serious things. That is one reason why I can't laugh. When he iniates a meeting with sexist humor, does he turn you off for the whole meeting. Oh, I wouldn't say turn me off, but I am certainly not at my most alert. Do you sour, I asked? I wouldn't put it that strong but I am anxious for him to go on and get down with the business at hand. There again, I have to like and respect and all the other things people that I laugh with. Now that could be my own hang-up.

You would say that a small percentage of this he approaches through sexist humor. " Alot of

this has to do with his generation." Do you think there is a need to sensitize young people going into administration toward sexist humor? It might take care of itself once women become common-place in administrative themes. The sensitivity may evolve from that. Does interjecting this type of humor create a type of environment which equalizes the statuses among people, the social ranking within the room? Here? No. Could you see that as a function of humor ? Equalizing? It can be. How would you suggest that be done? I think a different individual in a different situation can use it as a leveling devise. If I were in a meeting with all the principals and I am the only classroom teacher, whoever is in charge can interject some humor and we all laugh together, I think that is a leveling type of use of it.

Ms. Kay Johnson
Special Education teacher

Ms. Johnson is a young black woman who is completing her second year at Weber High School. Prior to teaching at Weber, Ms. Johnson taught speech and language for two years in a neighboring rural county. " I taught in three schools in Jefferson county. I had one elementary school, one middle school, and one senior high school which I visited weekly." So you have had plenty of opportunity to work with different principals. Would you say that Dr. C. probably uses more humor, or less, or equal to the amount of humor of the other principals you have been with. I would say more humor. What impact do you think does a principal's humor has on the culture and climate of a school? As large as this school we have, with so many different classes between people who are economically and culturally different, I don't know how it would affect it. I don't know.

Do you think it helps the principal in dealing with teachers, the fact that he has a sense of humor? From my point of view, I like it. Why do you like it? I like working around people

who are not stiff shirts. I love people who have a sense of humor, who do their job and stay professional. How do you think humor affects your productivity? I don't think it has affected mine at all. I know what is expected of me. I appreciate that in a person and I would feel respect for a person, but I am still going to do the same job. Do you feel that it is easier to communicate with administrators with a sense of humor? Much easier to communicate, she said.

Have you noticed that Dr. C uses a great deal of humor in faculty meetings? Yes. Is that different from what you found in rural areas? Yes, it was cut and dry, cut and dry. I think those principals felt that they might offend someone. Do you think using humor can be offensive? It can be, but I don't think Dr. C's humor is sexist or racist. Have you noticed that other people on the faculty perceive his humor as sexist or racist? I haven't heard anyone say. Have you observed people in faculty meetings who turn away when he tells a joke or who you perceive as not appreciating what he is doing? I think some of them are. It is at the end of the day, and I have noticed that here at this school, faculties do not get really involved and I think that is bad for a school. But as far a faculty meetings go, the faculty wants to come in, get in over with, and they are ready to go. They almost run over each other getting out of the door.

Do you think Dr. C telling jokes adds to them wanting to get out? No, we don't say in faculty meetings that long. We go in and he may say something humorous just break the ice. Why do you think he says something humorous to break the ice? "Well, after a full day of teaching you can encounter, you just encounter anything. Your stress level can be extremely high, and you have to go to a meeting (her voice rising). It can be something, extra paper work that you might have to do. It is just a good ice breaker. I enjoy it. I do.

You mention that you felt that humor can be used to relieve stress. Can you recall any specific instance Dr. C. using humor that you found reduced your stress level, your anxiety level? " I teach in an area that is stressful. I deal with a lot of different behaviors such as the

unskilled. They are super hypher active at the end of the day. They are ready to go. It is hard to keep them on task. So I am not feeling a great deal of accomplishment. I don't know if that means anything to you. I have to drill. I am drained sixth period to keep them on task constantly and to keep them quite and to study and to not attack each other sometimes." When I go down to the faculty meetings and he says something humorous to me, or you are one of the audience, right, at that moment I am relieve of the stress. Now when I walk out the door, it may come back to my my mind. You appreciate him telling jokes, if that is the reason. And it doesn't offend me."

Do you ever do use humor with your students? Yes. So you have incorporated humor into your teaching style. Do you possibly tell jokes? I can joke with them . Now as far as talking with them about their life styles and things of that sort, no. You feel that is inappropriate? Yes. Can you tell jokes? Do you tell jokes? No, not alot. In fact, hardly ever. Dealing with students you have to be careful about what you say, so everything I say I think about. Do you think Dr. C. thinks about the type of joke he is telling. "Are you talking about the joke that might have, errr, sexuality?" Yes, could be. You you think he thinks about the type of jokes he is telling? I don't know if his jokes are planned or if they come off the top of his head.

Has he ever told a joke where you felt personally offended? No. Do you think there are different implications of humor for male and female teachers? In other words, when he tells a joke do you think, possibly, that he tells the types of humor that has, not only, different interpretations but different meanings for males and females? "I don't think he really thinks about it as being male or female." Are there any types of jokes that people tell that would probably offend you and that might cause you to move away from them? Yes, a racist joke. That should offend anyone, should it? What about a joke that puts women in a lower, less honorable position? I don't appreciate that. Do you ever recall recall him telling a joke like that? I don't recall.

Do you feel possibly you would had a better rapport with the administrators if you had of had something to laugh about? "Laughter has a way of bringing people together of different levels. Here is an administrator who is telling a joke. You feel more comfortable because you are at the same level. We are both laughing together at whatever it is we are laughing. I have been on jobs where I just really hated to go to the administrator." I like it here. I think the principal's humor has helped me adjust to the size of the school.

Ray Mitchell
Physics Instructor

Mr. Mitchell has taught for seventeen years, all at Weber High School. He has worked under two Executive principals and a number of assistant principals. "Let's see - one, two, three, four, five assistant principals." So you have had some opportunity to observe several administrative styles in your tenure at Weber, I said. . Would you say that Dr. C uses humor more than other principals that you have around? "Well, you would have to qualify your question Do you mean formally use humor or naturally use humor? Formally, yes. How do you see those differing? Actually, I rank him with most of the other administration as far as informal, off the cuff , good-natured humor, spontaneous things. Although when it comes to formal use of humor he is head and shoulders above the others. What kind of humor does he use? He tells jokes out of a joke book,at least that is the appearance he gives.

What impact do you think does a principal's humor has on the climate of the school? In the specific case of Dr. C, I would say it has virtually no effect. Why is this? Because he tells jokes, as I said, he appears to be looking them up ahead of time in a toastmaster type book. He tells a couple of jokes in a faculty meeting and there are a few people who probably go out of there who liked the joke and tell it to a couple of people afterwards, but any effect it has on the

atmosphere or attitude of the faculty as a whole I think is negligible.

Well, why do you think he does it? Good question. It is a comfortable, easy way to start a meeting. Do you think it serves as a way to reduce, an icebreaker at the beginning of the meetin?. Does it have any effect on the stress in teaching? Well, there is usually not much tension before a faculty meeting. I think it would if there was. I think it would serve that function. I think it would relax people. I think he intends primarily, you know I have never asked him so I am just guessing, I think he intends it as "an effort toward intimacy", if you know what I mean. No, I don't. To some extent by starting off a meeting telling a few jokes it breaks down the barrier between the principal and the faculty. Like a teacher telling a few jokes will break down the barrier between the teacher and the students and that is what I really mean by intimacy. It brings the level to where they are closer because you are sharing in something that is "humorousese", that that is enjoyable at the beginning of a section.

Are you saying, then, that you perceive that it has some effect on the bonding or the relationships of people between different statuses? Exactly. That is the primary function I think that it serves as he uses it. Do you think that the intent is actually doing that? Hmm, I think so. Now I have a good relationship with him already so it has very little effect on me, but for someone, if there were a distance relationship between a teacher and this particular administrator, I think it does serve that function. I know him and joke around with him all the time, but I presume the majority of the faculty doesn't. So I think it serves that function for those folks.

What effect do you think the structure of a school has on how a principal uses humor? Is it because we are so big that you believe that that's actually a conducive way of beginning a meeting. It actually helps facilitate. If we were a smaller school, maybe between twenty and thirty people, would the same technique work? Wel', referring back to what I said earlier, I

think it has to do with the relationship. A principal can be distant from a faculty of only twenty five teachers, in which case joke telling would serve the same function. So I think it has to do with the pre-existing relationshp between the joke teller and the listener. If it is already a close relationship, I don't think it has much effect at all. If it is not a close relationship, I think it serves the function of bringing the administrator and the faculty member a little bit more intimate.

Have you noticed any pattern of Dr. C's jokes? Are their sexist jokes, racist jokes? Are there any type of jokes that you can categorize that he tells? Well, I am trying to remember recurring themes. I think sex, gender related jokes occur frequently. And the other type that occur frequently are religious jokes. Sometimes that is just a background, but he tells jokes like the Baptist preacher and the rabbi, you know this kind of story. I hear more of those, as I recall, than any other. But he does tell a variety.

What has been your observation of people when he tells a joke? How do they take his joke telling? Have you looked around the room? Have you made any observations? I would say that faculty meetings occur at the end of the day most people are comatosce by that time. Most teachers are comatosce. I think it wakes them up a little I have seen them become more alert. It may serve that function. Starting off a meeting by saying, let's come to order or the first thing I would like to talk about, you still got people who are probably unconscious. Starting off with a joke raises the attention level, I think, just as if he became naked would do the same thing, perhaps even more. So that is the primary thing that I have noticed is that it raises the teaching level. In other word, you could say in the general sense it improves communication in meeting by again, striking a little intimacy by telling a joke. The other things that I have noticed, you want the other things I have noticed? Yes.

I have noticed an increase in attention level. I have noticed some other people who will sit

there and count the number of jokes that he tells and who have bet a head of time and whoever counts the right number of jokes wins the kitty. So some people, what would you say, have developed a tolerance to his jokes and for those people who are counting them more than they are lessening to them so there is that variety of response. Have you noticed people who, when he tells a joke, are possibly turned off because he is telling a joke of a sexist, or racist, or religious nature? "You know I have expected that. I usually sit up from so I could see a lot of people but I have never seen it. So I don't know where people are showing it visually or not. I am sure that is there, particularly for certain kinds of jokes. But I have never seen any direct, visual evidence of that kind of stuff." I have seen alot of you know, oh me, that kind of thing that people normally respond when they hear a joke of certain types. Is this before or after a joke has been told? Well both. When he starts off telling jokes, you see a little bit of that, oh me, here we go.

Why do you think that is so? Because he does it at almost every general faculty meeting. Is there a purpose to his joke telling do you think, other than to relieve...what we have already discussed. Does he really try to drive home a point? I really don't think there is, but his pattern seems to be he tells about four or five jokes and the last one, I believe, he has selected so that when he finishes and delievers the punch line there is the possibility of him making some type of educational thought.. He definitely gives the impression that the analogy comes after the joke and the analogy is usually somewhat strained, but he does make an attempt to make it minimally relevant. But it is usually the last joke in a series.

How significant do staff members think that humor is to a building principal? Do you think that is a good asset to have? Again we have to go back to that differentiation I made at the very beginning. If we are talking about formal humor, I think it has minimal value. " I would vote for a principal who starts off a faculty meeting with a couple of jokes over one who does against

one who doesn't even if they are totally irrelevant. Because? Because of the intimacy involved. The administrator looks more human because the administrator is up there trying to make people happy, trying to make people laugh. That gives a good impression to a subordinate about the person in authority." So I think formal jokes serve that point. In the other aspect that I alluded to, the informal, I think it is critical in almost any environment where you have an hierarchy of leadership and there is stress, there is tension, whatever the problems. I think it is extremely valueable to show humor or even just to suddenly digress into humor and then back to business. I think is extremely valueable. And with the assistant principals with whom I have worked, some have had that and some have not. And it has made a significant difference both in my relationship with the person when we are in a situation and it has even made a difference whether or not I tend to go and communicate with that person when there is a problem because I know we will be able to joke about it. Can I mention names here? Yes.

The classic example of two people at extremes is that we had an assistant principal for many years who became assistant suptintendent named Henderson and we had another assistant principal by the name of Stone. Now these two people were at opposite poles of what I am talking about. The first individual was a fine person. He was a good administrator but he was stiff and I never took a single problem to him the entire year. Of course I don't do alot of that anyway, but if something had of arisen I doubt if I would have. The other fellow I would take almost anything to because when I went down there and told him what the situation was, the first thing he would do would eitherbe to say something to embarass me in fun or make some ridiculous statement that was inappropriate to the serious or severity of the problem and it just showed that we had a working relationship between us, but it was informal. It was something that I had come to expect when interacting with that person so humor in that kind of environment, off the cuff kind of humor, the ability to look at a situation humorously. I think is essential to a person in a

leadership role who has to deal with subordinates in a stress situation.

You say you think it improves the climate. What effect does it have on productivity or does it have any effect? In the sense that it reduces stress and improves communication between two people, then most likely that is going to be improved productivity such in terms of resolving that specific problem and as I have in terms of, a history of good communication is going to tend to foster further communication. I am going to go back to that person again who has a problem because, again, I know it is a confortable environment and we can both see the seriousness and the humor in the situation. There are analogies to this if you would like an analogy.

I have been in any number of surgerical suites in my earlier history and worked with a different variety of surgeons in different capacities and the exact same thing transferred to that. The ability of somebody who is in charge of operative procedure to show a little humor in the middle of it makes all the people with whom he or she is working relaxed and I think the entire procedure goes more smoother because of that. So it is an identical situation moving from an educational mileau into a surgerical suite. Do you think there might be other tense working environments that you would expect to act that this? That I don't know. I have no idea, but I know, I am almost sure, that it would be similarly affected.

Are there different implications of humor for male and female teachers from your observation? You mean responses to them by gender? For most of his humor I would think that was not the case for I have seen him joke around with people in the Central Office . Again ,this is the informal type. Some of the jokes that he tells, sexist type jokes, I would assume that the males would be more receptive because 99.9% of the sexist jokes use the female as the object. I would think that would produce less effective results but I have never observed that. If he tells sexist jokes or if they are perceived as such, what effect do you think that has on the working environment for those who perceive it as being sexist? Are you asking would it tend to

polarize? I think it would if in fact it occurs, but I don't recall seeing anybody react to that differential. But the same thing as if you told a racist joke. The tendency to polarize the faculty. If you told a female victim joke you would polarize them along gender lines. Perhaps even if you told them another ethnic joke. If you told a joke against an Irishman, by jolly, you would never get my vote again.

How do you think he selects his jokes? I think he moves to the next chapter of his joke book. Do you think the selection of his jokes has something to do with the reflection of his peers, and his socialization experiences. That is an interesting question. That is almost a given. Assuming you read a joke book what causes you to pick out, I guess it would be the jokes that you found humorous, that reflect what is funny to you. So by definition, I guess, that would reflect his time frame. I am just wondering if possibly he tells a sexist joke which he feels funny, could it reflect subsciously a message that he has a sexist attitudes or at least different opinions about men and women? Or it may reflect something. He may have various other attitudes that might show up in a joke but something is sanctioning him from using those. For instance, he never tells racial jokes. That is no prove he does not have racial prejudice. He has enough sense not to tell them. So it is a matter of sanction. He does tell sexist jokes. He may also feel, he may realize that they are hot potatoes too, but there is nothing that keeps him from telling it. So he feels safe in telling sexist jokes. He does feel safe in telling racist jokes. He feels safe in telling religious related jokes. So those two areas I feel he feels comfortable and the other area he avoids. We don't know for sure whether that is the result of the jokes he picks out that he really thinks is funny or rather that he goes through a selection process that he says, 'boy, this is really hillerious but I could never tell it in a faculty meeting, now that may go on.' Now the joke subject areas that he sanctions or doesn't sanction, I think reflect his background. So you really have both: the jokes that he tells and the jokes that he doesn't tell both show something of

his values. I think it would for any of us.

The fact that he tells sexist jokes, does that say that he is not sensitive to his audience, that he has certain ideas about certain social structures within or among his faculty? I think it indicates that he is insensitive to the, in effect, those most sensitive about it because he doesn't tell racial jokes. There are all sorts of hillarious ethnic and racist jokes with every group in the world and in the history of the universe can be the subject matter of and he never tells it. So I think he is sensitive to them (race) and I don't think he is insensitive to gender because he tells quite a few of those. I don't think he is sensitive to different religious groups because he tells religious jokes. He really doesn't care or he is not sensitive to those and I think it is the latter case because if he didn't really care he would tell off. You know, I can offend everybody, that kind of attitude, and yet he avoids certain subject matter and regularly includes others. So to me that indicates that he is not aware of that some of his selection might bother people.

Have you hear any member of the school staff talk about Dr. C's jokes, any specific joke, or have you heard any comments? I have heard a lot of people telling them. I have never heard anybody critique his jokes other than that fact, what I mentioned to you earlier, that some people try to guess how many he is going to tell. But I have not heard anyone say, No, I can't believe he told that joke in front of the entire faculty or something like that. When you go down there now do you expect to have jokes told to you? I anticipate it. It's a given. It's a given. Especially a lengthy, full size faculty meeting which will last 45 minutes long or 30 minutes long. Now if we go down there for only ten minutes cause of the MNEA report or something, I wouldn't expect it because again, there he is sensitive. Let's get it over with and go home. But a regularly scheduled faculty meeting, yes, I think it is almost a given.

Do you think there is any relationship to the fact that of all the schools in Scarsville, we get fewer requests for transfers than any other school? Do you think that he uses humor as part

of his administrative style has any relationship to that? Well, at the very beginning I said I think his joke telling has very little effect, other than just the ice breaking. The actual joke telling facilitating the need. Now we are talking about the general effect of the effect he does have. That might have a slight effect. For instance would you rather have a principal who does that or one who doesn't? How does that make you feel about that person? Are they approachable and do they see the humor in all the violence and I think the fact that someone just tells jokes at a meeting is a slight indicator that that person is going to be more approachable and take a more tempermental, light-hearted. He doesn't get ticked at follibles, and will provide assistantance when a problem arise. I think that it would be interesting to compare, if there was any way to find that out to what degree an administrator who doesn't do that, who doesn't do that at all and see what the faculty relationship is. I would be interesting to see what the statistic was. It might have an effect but I am sure that there are many, many other variables and I am not sure how you could get to that. I think his hands off policy towards teachers is probably more attributable to the low transfer rate, in terms of principal affect, than his use of humor. But I think in a sense they go hand in hand. How do you see that?

I think the principal who has the self confidence to start off a meeting by telling jokes, who the relationship between himself or herself and the teachers, is going to be a principal who is probably not very rigid and who will monitor people closely for dotting every" i", crossing every" t", I would think one would infer that those two things would go together and it might in a very indirect way make you feel more comfortable about your job. This is not going to be be someone who is so insecure and so rigid that he is will be looking at you over your shoulder. It may send that message in a very, very suttle kind of way.

Thinking about what we just said, do you think a subliminal message that is being given by an administrator who tells sexist jokes, could the subliminal message be that it is all right to be

male on this faculty. That there is a good ol' boy attitude. That depends upon the nature of the sexist joke. The more I think about it, I am trying to review, I can't remember that many specific jokes, but I am just trying to remember in general. The jokes that he tells which are sexist are not, the more that I think about it, are not as female victim jokes as the majority, probably, of all sexist jokes ever is. The more I think about it the more I think there is an inordinate, rather large percentage of his jokes that are sex related but quite a few of them the subject is male. The female sorta evolves in his stories. I remember he tells the joke about the guy in the doctor's office who said he didn't remember whether he was coming or going and the doctor has him take off all of his clothes and has his go back and forth and he says I can't tell if you are coming or going either. I classify that as a sex joke. And it is a sexist joke in the sense that it makes the male the victim. The guy looks like a fool going back and forth on the floor on his hands and knees with no clothes on. So it is a male directed sexist joke. He probably tells as many of those as he does jokes about females. In fact the more I think about it, as I recall, he may tell more of those than he does the standard type sex joke using females when the woman become the victim. Yes. That may say something about this. That he is asystematic. Maybe that is why he doesn't put more men on the faculty because men tend to sluff that off more than women. They are less sensitive to jokes of this type. I mean a joke about impotency in males is not going to make very many men uptight, I don't think, whereas a joke about women being a victim of some type of sexual situation is more likely to offend. That may be part of his selection process. Given a set five sex jokes he may dump the one that has a female victim because he may be sensitive to the fact that female teachers don't like them. He does seem to tell more of those. Are there any specific things which have happen on the faculty which tells you he has somewhat of a sexist attitude? You mean chauvinistic? No, but I haven't really observed. Nothing comes to mind.

If humor is found to serve a purpose should administrators have some training along these lines? I will tell you one thing. I think the ability to use humor, especially in tight situations, has been developed over a long time. So to the extent which you could train in aspiring administrators is going to be fatal because I think it is a style. I mean there are life experiences which are genetic. I think you couldn't train it very efficiently because it is a natural part of some people's coping mechanism and it isn't part of other people's coping mechanism. However, I think you could possibly at least introduce it as an option so people might learn or think about, etc by having some type of course using role playing. Putting people into teaching situations and see, the idea being ok here comes the situation. How can I lighten the air? I think maybe, that people could learn how to do that. But that is probably all. Because I think the ability to see the humor in a situation is long time learned. I don't think a course.. Do you think it could be used effectively with students? in interaction with students? Suppose Dr. C. interacted with students. Do you think he could use could humor resolve conflict.

If the administrator and the students have already established a relationship, I think it could be very effective. If not, it is too dangenous. Why do you think it is too dangerous? Because the message it would send is I can't help you. If you have a good relationship with somebody, even all the way down the ladder from the administrator to the student, there is a preexisting relationship of mutual trust, of understanding, whatever, then I think it can be dealt with very effectively for the all of the same reasons that we have said before, that it breaks the ice, it lightens the tension situation, it shows humaness , or it show the administrator's humanity even though he or she is in a very domineering role as far as the students are concerned. But I think most of that will come if the communication and trust relationship has already been pre-established. In the absence of that, I think the use of humor in a stress situation, as a result of too much people will take that as ridiculous, as a loop hole, as a gap, and people will turn

around and slap you in the face with it. It would be dangerous to use if you didn't already know the person within the relationship, some kind of a floor already established. Of course where do you start that? A good example would be in a small student where the big principal has an assembly program. He tells the kids all of the rules and stuff at the beginning of school. If you could establish in an effective way there, that you are a human person, that you see the humor and the game, in the system that we play and so forth, if you do that then you might be able to use it in a specific cases. But without that as a starting ground, I think you really leave yourself open by being humorous, by being funny about a serious situation.

Some people who use humor in an administrative role to do the things we have said, to lighten the atmosphere, establish rapport and so forth it is a way communication. They have to be the joke teller. If you come back with something they stiffen up a little bit. I am not sure what the mechanism is which is going on there or how they are preceiving it, whether they are doing it themselves. It maybe they are using humor because they feel like they need to, but because it is not really long termed leraned behavior for them they are uncomfortable with it. So for them to tell a joke and to ligthen the atmosphere is effective. For other people to respond humorously is a lost of control. It might be. It is funny you are identifying humor first as we are going to create equal status among the group members and then as seen as someone outside of power starts using humor, they go crazy. They feel threaten. And the same thing applies to the administrator tried to used that with the student in a disciplinary situation, vis-a-vis disciplinary control, which probably would happen unless there was that preestablished rapport which I mentioned earlier. But I still think it is an interesting technique for people to use in administrative positions and I think other people can use it.

Kennedy used it with the press. Reagen. Maybe one of the problems we have with Bush is that he doesn't use humor as well. Read my hips...The same is true with CEOs. I think the fact that

Federal Express took off like a rocket in the beginning, was partially the result that there was a market there and they filled in a slot, but I think to a major extext that it was the solidary personality of that company president who had a good natured, light hearted He was an authority. He took care of business. He did his homework. He was a a motivator. He was a full all -American entrepreneur but he had the ability to deal with his rank and file employees by laughing with them, slapping them on the back, kidding with them. And I think it had more of an effect on productivity than probably any other thing that got that company started. And you think that is a admirable quality to have in administrators, that they can prove that kind of climate, ..that they can generate someone at the top of the hierarchy. That is where it is most needed because you are going to want to work for someone like that. They are excited. They love the work. They love life and you are working for them.. And they can communicate that to you. They love their company. You are going to love their company. I think they share it. They enculcate it.

Dr. Henry Ayres
Social Studies teacher

Dr. Ayres has been teaching social studies for nineteen years, all of it in the Scarsville School District. This is the third school he has worked in as a teacher. What effect do you think a principal's humor has on the climate of a school? I don't know if I would go so far as to say that humor itself greatly impacts the climate. If you use that, sort of, you know to break the ice at meetings, then that's ok. But if you take a serious approach to administration, then I can deal with the humor as long as you use humor in those areas which don't have any adverse effect.

Do you think humor can take away from running a school? Do you think it takes away from faculty meetings? For me, personally, it has no effect because I don't value people on such a

one-dimensional approach. That is a part of his personality and as long as he gets the job done, as long as he enjoys that, as long as he doesn't expect me to laugh at all of them, fine. Do you think other members of the faculty feel the same way? Do you think they appreciate his humor or are they turned off by it? It is hard to say. "I have seen him, and I guess I have heard comments that would probably go from the cynical to the loud, falling type laughter that is really unnecessary, just to draw somebody's attention that I laughing at your joke." I have seen the gamet. It is hard to say. I think alot of people take it with a grain of salt. I know I do . "It doesn't impact me one way or another that he wants to spend a few minutes telling a few jokes and then gets down to the serious business."

In the past, in other schools, we had faculty meetings on a week-to-week basis, Ayres said pounding the table as he spoke. These meetings were totally unnecessary and didn't get any thing done anyway. When you have faculty meetings on the average of once or twice a month, if that many times, if the man wants to tell a few jokes, let him tell a few jokes. Do you think there is a purpose in him starting this meeting this way? I don't know. I haven't thought about it other than I think it probably relaxes him. His administrative style tends to lean itself to things that relax people. For example, the breakfast that we might have at the beginning of each year. You know, you come back and you might be uptight about coming back. But you know, if someone thinks enough about your being to start your day off with a nice breakfast. He takes into consideration that we are coming back and that we do need something to break the ice, to get back in fellowship with each other, and that helps because you find yourself speaking with people, seeing people that you haven't seen in a long time and that helps them too.

Have you noticed any pattern as far as the types of jokes that he is telling? "I think he probably would like to get a little bit more risque," Ayres said, "but he handles himself and remembers where he is. I think that is his just his nature. I have heard him tell a couple that

weren't in dignity and that weren't as nice. Do you think there are some other faculty, who see his jokes as risque or offensive? " Oh, sure. When you are dealing with a 149 people, if you told a joke dealing with little red riding hood you know that is going to offend somebody. I personally don't find them offensive and on the average, I don't think he tells risque jokes. Risque means what? Jokes that might have some profanity in them, jokes that are told that are under the dress kind of jokes. Do you perceive any of his humor to be sexist or do you perceive other people perceiving it this way? No, I don't and I haven't heard any comments about that.

Of what importance is a principal's sense of humor toward creating cohesiveness among staff members? I think it is very important because it lets you know that he is relaxed and sure of his own position, that he can show that side of himself or herself. "Sometimes you are going to bomb. Sometimes people aren't going to like your jokes. And some people are going to think you are silly for doing that, for being an executive principal and telling jokes, but it lets people know that this person choose that he can show this side."

Do you think that this improves school morale? People that I talk with and who like working here say yes They like his way of doing things. I guess I should speak more in terms of male faculty members that I talk with about this. They say they like his style. It lends itself to helping you out in so far as your own creativity is concerned. You aren't afraid to do things here that might include work habits or whatever. And I'm not sure that it might not increase morale to the point that I have heard a couple of comments that when he leaves, we are leaving. You mentioned male. Do you think there are different implications of humor for male and female teachers? Could be. The reason I said male is I don't remember hearing a comment from a female teacher regarding his jokes one way or another. "I think possibly, from the looks that I see on some females faces, I think it may have the tendency to make some of them plush." Why do you think it causes them to plush? Some jokes, as I said, are risque. I think risque is too

strong a word because when you think of risque you think of those jokes that shouldn't be told in mixed company and I don't think these are that kind of jokes. I just think that some people are more sensitive than others. Let's put it this way. They want their public image, they want people to think they are more sensitive.

What effect does the structure of the school nave on a principal using jokes? Do you think it would be conducive? Nonconducive? What of productivity? That is hard to say. I am incline to think that it would because I am incline to think that situations like that, that I can remember when I was in small schools, at times you needed [and of course it could have been just been this person's administrative style] something to break the ice, to let people come a little closer to his administrative style. You feel this does this? I think it does. It opens you up. You think it enhances the bond between employer and his workers? It has prove to me that it does because someone who is not always serious is probably be a little bit more approachable than someone whose administrative style is involves more business like practices.The other principals that you have worked with, would Dr. C. probably be in the upper ranks among those you could approach if you had a problem? Yes, probably so. I am not able to make a wide comparison but I think he would be approachable.

There have been some on the faculty who have said that some of Dr. C's jokes are discriminating toward women. Have you perceived this? Perhaps, being male, I might be somewhat insensitive to that kind of joke where if I was female I might be sensitized to that kind of humor. I find that a large number of people in today's society in some way or another find humor in sexual inuedo , so it would not be out of the ordinary. A certain percentage of his jokes also are going to fit into that category. If you were female and working on this faculty, would having an administrator who told sexually discriminating jokes affect your productivity? I don't know. I think it would affect my morale because I would feel that this individual was

insensitive to me if everytime there was a inference coming out of his mouth or joke whatever that it in someway was about a negative side of women. I think I would be somewhat upset after awhile I had to sit and listen to him.

If you decide to tell a joke, does it reflect a person's values? I think to some degree, to some degree it would have to. Now to what degree I don't know because I think what ever you do, whatever you say, whatever you write it is a part of you and has got to reflect some part of you. Should jokes drive home a point? I don't see his jokes as having relevance and, of course, it may be the way I listen because usually my listening is a low level at that particular point because I know that this is not serious. I am going to sit here and do something until the joke telling is over and then when he starts talking about things I really need to listen to, I listen. And I haven't been able to see a relationship to the joke telling and the actual purpose that we are there.

Conclusions

One way of viewing the principal's use of humor at school is to look through the four frames identified by Bolman and Deal (1984). The boundaries between these frames are fluid because of a sharing of organizational goals, the ranks of authority, the system of coordination, and a communication system which includes, as one of its elements, the principal's humor. The structural frame views a principal's humor as part of a mechanism which, along with several other components, allows the organization to function and achieve its goals. The data collected in this paper indicates that the principal's sense of humor affected the culture and the climate of the school in question.

Principals interviewed during the research process viewed a sense of humor as being

important in their work. It provided "a sense of homeyness" and "took the starch out of the normal school structure" by enabling staff members to perceive a rather formal, bureaucratic organization in a less formal, structured way. Humor provided administrators a tool to deal with conflicts between administrator-teacher, teacher-teacher, and parent-teacher. Teachers, also, felt that a sense of humor on the part of the principal contributed in a positive way to the working environment of the school. Every staff member interviewed, even the ones who did not like Dr. C. telling sexist humor, said that Dr. C had, as his intent, an improved working environment in the school when he used faculty meetings to tell jokes. By establishing a climate which is pleasant and conducive for his staff to work in, a school administrator is greater assured that the products of his school, the students, will be of a higher quality.

The human resource frames examines the sociopsychological aspects of humor that we all have. All men have the capability to laugh. It is a life long process that we carry with us. Though we might not understand its function, it allows individuals to experience and share similiar feelings. Humor provides addrenium to members of the organization. It provides a way for the group to release stress. Indeed, one respondent said "it just feels good to leave at the end of the day with a laugh." As part of my research for this paper, I participated in a humor workshop sponsored by the Vanderbilt Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Hospital. I spent the first hour-and-a-half of my working day laughing at various quips, jokes, pieces of humor that the speaker had brought in as part of her presentation. During the rest of the day, I noticed my temperment in handling crisis conflict was so much better I couldn't believe it. I can see a time when humor will be a part of the start of each workday just as exercise is presently part of the workday in many Japanese and some American organizations. I think it is possible that this humor might be computer generated.

When a principal uses humor in faculty meetings, he is creating a psychological condition

which can minimize diversity among its members. A common emotional response or an emotional release produces a communication system which is understood by other members of the group and our need to belong, to be accepted, is met.

The political frame may be use to explain different interpretations of the same joke or to compare the individual values of the initiator/receiver of a joke to the values of the receiver/initiator. This explains the conflict that many women in my research at Weber High School were having with the jokes being initiated by Dr. C. His values, as reflect from his socialization experiences, were different from women reared in the fifties and the sixties who had been nurtured by the equal rights movement. This explains why some of the female teachers interviewed said they were "tried" of his jokes. Two of the three women interviewed described his jokes as sexist. Indeed, several women faculty members had been observed by male teachers shaking their head while he was telling his jokes yet men rarely respond in the same way. As one respondent said, any time one tells a joke or some humorous story ,one runs the risk of being alienated by some members of the organization because they don't share the same values. This is why I concur with Kushner that in formal organizations, if humor is going to be effective, it should be relevant to the points be addressed at the meeting. Dr. C admitted to me that the humor he used at faculty meetings frequently was not intended to make a point and here, I believe, lies the source of the problem. It is interesting to me that since I began this paper, Dr. C is more cognizant of how some teachers feel about some of his jokes and has reframed from using sexist humor at the beginning of his meetings.

Finally, the symbolic frame gives one an understanding of the interactive, nonverbal communicative patterns that exist between a principal and his staff. A formal or an informal social ranking exists in all organizations but by creating moments of shared laughter, the principal creates a bond among the group and allows the group to develop into a productive unit.

What is intended as good-natured experiences are shared by a majority of those in the organization and a feeling of comeraderie develops in an environment where there may be little adult interaction of the entire school staff at any other time during of the school year. "It lets us know he is one of us," one teacher said. Humor appears to create bonds among the employees and to facilitate the accomplishment of work tasks.

There is a need to acknowledge the importance of humor as it relates to administrator-teacher relations in schools. Humor is a management tool perceived by some principals as a way of relieving stress at school. Both principals and teachers perceived a sense of humor as important in creating satisfying job conditions. One way principals may use humor is to socialize new faculty members to the culture and climate of a school. This also helps to bond the relationships of older faculty members and renew their commitment to the principles and values of the school. Subgroups within a school may respond differently to the use of humor by a principal. Future research efforts should concentrate on the communicative process of humor: When should school administrators use humor? How might the culture and climate of an organization be affected should humor be systematically interjected as a part of the working day? What are the effects of humor in loosely constructed organizations such as boards of education?

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